

THOUGHTS

UPON THE

AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE, - *Africa*

MATTHEW VII. 12.

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them :
for this is the law and the prophets.

ROMO QUM 2--

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

THE nature and effects of that unhappy and disgraceful branch of commerce, which has long been maintained on the coast of Africa, with the sole and professed design of purchasing our fellow-creatures, in order to supply our West-India islands and the American colonies, when they were ours, with slaves, is now generally understood. So much light has been thrown upon the subject by many able pens, and so many respectable persons have already engaged to use their utmost influence for the suppression of a traffic which contradicted the feelings of humanity, that it is hoped this stain of our national character will be soon wiped out.

If I attempt, after what has been done, to throw my mite into the public stock of information, it is less from an apprehension that my interference is necessary, than from a conviction that silence, at such a time and on such an occasion, would, in me, be criminal. If my testimony should not be necessary or serviceable, yet, perhaps, I am bound in conscience to take shame to

myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent or repair the misery and mischief to which I have, formerly, been accessory.

I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me, that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders. My headstrong passions and follies plunged me, in early life, into a succession of difficulties and hardships, which, at length, reduced me to seek a refuge among the natives of Africa. There, for about the space of eighteen months, I was in effect, though without the name, a captive, and a slave myself; and was depressed to the lowest degree of human wretchedness. Possibly I should not have been so completely miserable, had I lived among the natives only, but it was my lot to reside with white men; for at that time several persons of my own country had language were settled in that part of the Windward coast which lies between Sierra Leone and Cape Mount; for the purpose of purchasing and collecting slaves, to sell to the vessels that arrived from Europe.

This is a town from which few travellers return, who have once determined to venture upon a temporary residence there; but the good providence of God, without my expectation, and almost against my will, delivered me from those scenes of wickedness and woe, and I arrived at Liverpool, in May, 1748. I soon revisited the place of my captivity, as mate of a ship, and, in the year 1750, I was appointed commander, in which capacity I made three voyages to the windward coast for slaves.

I first saw the coast of Guinea, in the year 1749, and took my last leave of it in 1752. It was not, in sentimentally, a farewell; but, through the mercy of God,

in proved sail; it being, I think, the worst sort of weather, and was upon this point of sailing, when I was arrested by a sudden illness, and I resigned the ship to another captain. I was unexpectedly freed from this disagreeable service. Disagreeable I had long found it; but I think I should have quitted it sooner, had I considered how inconsistent, to be unfaithful and wrong. But I never had a single word upon this head at the time; nor was such a thought once suggested to me by any friend. What I did, I did ignorantly, considering it as the time of life which divine providence had allotted me, and having no concern, in point of conscience, for the slaves, while under my care, with as much humanity as regard to my own safety would admit. My experience and observation of nine years, would qualify me for being a competent witness upon this subject; could I safely trust to the report of memory, after an interval of more than thirty-three years. But in the course of so long a period, the ideas of past events and transactions grow indistinct; and I am aware, that what I have seen, and what I have only heard related, may by this time have become so intermingled together, that, in some cases, it may be difficult for me, if not impossible, to distinguish them with absolute certainty. It is, however, my earnest desire, and will therefore engage my utmost care, that I may offer nothing in writing, so from my own knowledge, which I could not cheerfully, if requisite, retract upon oath.

That part of the African shore, which lies between the Cape Verde Islands, lat. 8° 30' N. and Cape Palmas, is usually known by the name of the Windward; or

Grain Coast. The extent, (if my recollection does not fail me,) is about one hundred and fifty leagues. There is a fort upon Bonee Island, in Sierra Leon, which formerly belonged to the old African company: they also had a fort on an island in the river Sherbro; but the former was in private hands, and of the latter scarcely the foundations were visible, when I first went to Africa. There is no fort or factory upon this coast, under the sanction of our government; but there were, as I have said, and probably still are, private traders resident at Bonee Island, at the Benances, and at the Plantanes. The former of these is about twelve, and the latter twenty leagues from Sierra Leon to the south-east.

By these persons, the trade is carried on, in boats and challopes, thirty or forty leagues to the northward, in several rivers lying within the shoals of Rio Grande. But the most northerly place of trade for shipping is Sierra Leon, and the business there, and in that neighbourhood, is chiefly transacted with the white men: but from Sherbro to Cape Palmas, directly with the natives. Though I have been on the Gold Coast, and beyond it as far as Cape Lopez, in the latitude of one or two degrees south, I profess no knowledge of the African trade, but as it was conducted on the Windward Coast when I was concerned in it, I am not qualified, and if I were, I should think it rather unsuitable to my present character as a minister of the Gospel, to consider the African slave trade merely in a political light. This disquisition more properly belongs to persons in civil life. Only, thus far my character as a minister will allow and perhaps require me to observe, that the best human policy is

imprudently, in this case, for the sake of increasing the
 heap. He knows that such an addition would spoil
 the whole. God forbid that any supposed profit or
 advantage which we can derive from their groans and
 agonies, and blood, of the poor Africans, should draw
 down his heavy curse upon all that we might other-
 wise, honourably and comfortably possess.

For the sake of method, I could wish to consider
 the African trade; first, with regard to the effect it
 has upon our own people; and, secondly, as it concerns
 the blacks, or, as they are more contemptuously styled,
 the negro slaves, whom we purchase upon the coast.
 But these two topics are so intermingled together, that it
 will not be easy to keep them exactly separate.

1. The first point I shall mention is surely of po-
 litical importance, if the lives of our fellow-subjects be
 so; and if a rapid loss of seamen deserves the atten-
 tion of a maritime people. This loss in the African
 trade is truly alarming. I admit that many of them
 are cut off in their first voyage, and consequently, be-
 fore they can properly rank as seamen; though they
 would have been seamen if they had lived. But the
 neighbourhood of our sea-ports is continually drained of
 men and boys to supply the places of those killed
 abroad; and if they were not all seamen, they are all
 our brethren and countrymen, subjects of the British
 government, as well as all our children, &c. &c.

The people who remain on ship-board, upon the
 open coast, if not accustomed to the climate, are liable
 to the attack of an inflammatory fever, which is not
 often fatal, unless the occurrence of unfavourable cir-
 cumstances makes it so. When this danger is past, I
 think they might probably be as healthy as in most
 other voyages, provided they could be kept from sleep-

ing in the day, from being much exposed to the rain, from the intemperate use of spirits, and especially from exposure to the sun. I should say, upon another occasion, that Great Britain would be a happy country, provided all the inhabitants were wise and good. The sailors must be much exposed to the weather; especially on the Windward coast, where a great part of the cargo is procured by boats, which are often sent to the distance of thirty or forty leagues, and are sometimes a month before they return. Many vessels arrive upon the coast before the rainy season, which continues from about May to October, is over; and if trade be secured, the ships which arrive in the fair or dry season, often remain till the rains return, before they can complete their purchases. A proper shelter from the weather, in an open boat, when the rain is incessant, night and day, for weeks and months, is impracticable. I have myself, in such a boat, been six weeks together, without, as we say, a dry throat about the throat, or waking. And, during the fair season, hurricanes, or violent storms of wind, thunder, and heavy rain, are very frequent, though they seldom last long. In fact, the boats seldom return, without bringing some of the people ill of dangerous fevers or fluxes, occasioned either by the weather, or by an wholesome diet, such as the crude fruits and palm wine, with which they are plentifully supplied by the natives. Some of the sailors cannot often procure, in such a manner, so much as they wish of rum; and

appetites sometimes offer, especially to those who are in the boats: for strong liquor being an article much in demand, so that without it scarcely a single slave can be purchased, it is always at hand. And if what is taken from the casks or bottles that are for sale, be supplied with water, they are as full as they were before. The blacks who buy the liquor, are the losers by the adulteration; but often the people who cheat them are the greatest sufferers.

The article of women, likewise, contributes largely to the loss of our seamen. When they are on shore, they often, from their known thoughtless imprudence, involve themselves, on this account, in quarrels with the natives, and, if not killed upon the spot, are frequently poisoned. On ship-board they may be restrained; and in some ships they are; but such restraint is far from being general. It depends much upon the disposition and attention of the captain. When I was in the trade I knew several commanders of African ships who were prudent, respectable men, and who maintained a proper discipline and regularity in their vessels; but there were too many of a different character. In some ships, perhaps in the most, the licence allowed, in this particular, was almost unlimited. Moral turpitude was seldom considered, but they who took care to do the ship's business, might, in other respects, do what they pleased. These excesses, if they do not induce fever, at least render the constitution less able to support them; and lewdness, too frequently, terminates in death.

The risk of insurrections is to be added. There, I believe, are always meditated; for the men slaves are not easily reconciled to their confinement and treatment; and, if attempted, they are seldom suppressed.

and considerable loss; and sometimes they succeed, to the destruction of a whole ship's company at once. Scarcely a year passes, but we hear of one or more such catastrophes; and we likewise hear, sometimes, of Whites and Blacks involved, in one moment, in one common ruin, by the gunpowder taking fire, and blowing up the ship.

How far the several causes I have enumerated, may respectively operate, I cannot say; the fact, however, is sure, that a great number of our seamen perish in the slave trade. Few ships, comparatively, are either blown up, or totally cut off; but some are. Of the rest, I have known some that have lost half their people, and some a larger proportion. I am far from saying that it is always, or even often, thus; but I believe I shall state the matter sufficiently low, if I suppose, that at least one-fifth part of those who go from England to the coast of Africa, in ships which trade for slaves, never return from thence. I dare not depend too much upon my memory, as to the number of ships and men employed in the slave trade more than thirty years ago; nor do I know what has been the state of the trade since; therefore I shall not attempt to make calculations. But, as I cannot but form some opinion upon the subject, I judge it probable, that the collective sum of seamen, who go from all our ports to Africa within the course of a year (making Guinea, in the extensive sense, from Goree or Gambia, and including the coast of Angola,) cannot be less than eight thousand; and if, upon an average of ships and seasons, a fifth part of these die, the annual loss is fifteen hundred. I believe those who have taken pains to make more exact inquiries, will deem my supposition to be very moderate.

Thus much concerning the first evil, the loss of soul-men and subjects, which the nation sustains by the African slave trade.

2. There is a second, which either is, or ought to be, deemed of importance, considered in a political light: I mean, the dreadful effects of this trade upon the minds of those who are engaged in it. There are, doubtless, exceptions; and I would willingly except myself. But, in general, I know of no method of getting money, not even that of robbing for it upon the highway, which has so direct a tendency to efface the moral sense, to rob the heart of every gentle and humane disposition, and to harden it, like steel, against all impressions of sensibility.

Usually, about two-thirds of a cargo of slaves are males. When a hundred and fifty, or two hundred stout men, torn from their native land, many of whom never saw the sea, much less a ship, fill a short space before they are embarked: who have, probably, the same natural prejudice against a white man, as we have against a black; and who often bring with them an apprehension they are bought to be eaten: I say, when thus circumstanced, it is not to be expected that they will tamely resign themselves to their situation. It is always taken for granted, that they will attempt to gain their liberty if possible. Accordingly, as we do not trust them, we receive them on board, from the first, as enemies; and, before their number exceeds, perhaps, ten or fifteen, they are all put in irons; in most ships, two and two together. And frequently, they are not thus confined, as they might most conveniently stand or move, the right hand and foot of one to the left or the right, but each, that is, the hand and foot of each on the same side, whether right or

left, are fettered together: so that they cannot move either hand or foot, but with great caution, and with perfect consent. Thus they must sit, walk, and lie, for many months, (sometimes for nine or ten,) without any mitigation or relief, unless they are sick.

In the night, they are confined below: in the day-time, (if the weather be fine,) they are upon deck: and as they are brought by pairs, a chain is put through a ring upon their irons, and this is likewise locked down to the ring-bolts, which are fastened, at certain intervals, upon the deck. These, and other precautions, are no more than necessary: especially, as while the number of slaves increases, that of the people who are to guard them, is diminished, by sickness, or death, or by being absent in the boats: so that, sometimes, not two men can be mustered, to watch night and day, over two hundred, besides having all the other business of the ship to attend.

That these precautions are so often effectual, is much more to be wondered at, than that they sometimes fail. One unguarded hour, or minute, is sufficient to give the slaves the opportunity they are always waiting for, to attempt to rise upon the ship's company, bringing on inevitable and horrid war: for, when the passions are in motion, they are desperate; and where they do not conquer, they are seldom quelled without much mischief and bloodshed on both sides. Sometimes when the slaves are ripe for an insurrection, one of them will impropose the affair: and then necessity, and the state policy, of these small but most absolute governments, enforce maxims directly contrary to the nature of things. The traitor to the cause of liberty is not only rewarded, and deemed an heroic fellow, but the protectors, who formed and ani-

method the plan; if they can be found out, they are treated as villains, and punished, to intimidate the rest. These punishments, in their nature and degree, depend upon the prerogative will of the captain. Some are content with inflicting such moderate punishment as may suffice for an example. But unlimited power, instigated by revenge, and where the heart, by a long familiarity with the sufferings of slaves, is become callous, and insensible to the pleadings of humanity, is irresistible.

I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their misery, and hardly a sign of life has remained. I have seen them agonizing for hours, I believe for days together, under the torture of the thumb-screws; a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give insupportable anguish. There have been instances in which cruelty has proceeded still further; but, had hope they are few, and I can mention but one from my own knowledge, I shall not mention it.

I have often heard a captain, who has been long since dead, boast of his conduct in a former voyage, when his slaves attempted to rise upon him. After he had suppressed the insurrection, he sat in judgment upon the insurgents; and not only, in cold blood, adjudged several of them, I know not how many, to die; but studied with no small attention, how to make death as excruciating as possible. For my reader's sake, I suppress the recital of particulars.

Surely it must be allowed, that they who are long conversant with such scenes as these, are liable to im-
moral habits of ferocity, and have a insensibility, of which human nature, depraved as it is, is not ordi-

fully, capable. If these things be true, the reader will admit the possibility of a fact that was in current report when I was upon the coast, and the truth of which, though I cannot now authenticate it, I have no reason to doubt.

A mate of a ship, in a long-boat, purchased a young woman, with a fine child, of about a year old, in her arms. In the night, the child cried much, and disturbed his sleep. He rose up in great anger, and swore, that if the child did not cease making such a noise, he would presently silence it. The child continued to cry. At length he rose up a second time, tore the child from the mother, and threw it into the sea. The child was soon silenced indeed, but it was not so easy to pacify the woman, who was too valuable to be thrown overboard, and he was obliged to bear the sound of her lamentations, till he could put her on board his ship.

I am persuaded, that every tender mother, who fears her eyes and her mind when she contemplates her infant in her arms, will commiserate the poor African. Why do I speak of one child, when we have heard and read a melancholy story, too numerous to admit of reticence, of more than a hundred grown slaves, thrown into the sea, at one time, from on board a ship, when fresh water was scarce; to fix the loss upon the underwriters, which otherwise, had they died on board, must have fallen upon the owners of the vessel. These instances are specimens of the spirit produced, by the African trade, in men, who, once, were no more destitute of the milk of human kindness than ourselves.

It is not, however, considered the condition of the men slaves only. From the women, there is no danger

of insurrection, and they are carefully kept, even the
negro, & mean, from the black man. But in what
I have to offer, on this head, I am far from including
every ship. I speak not of what is universally, but of
what is too commonly, and, I am afraid, too generally
prevalent.

I have already observed, that the captain of an
African ship, while upon the coast, in absolute in his
command; and if he be humane, vigilant, and deter-
mined, he has it in his power to protect the miserable
for anything any thing can be done, on board the ship,
without his permission, or connivance. But this power
is, for the most part, exerted in favour of the poor women
slaves.

When we hear of a town taken by storm, and given
up to the ravages of an enraged and licentious army,
of wild and unprincipled cossacks, perhaps no part of
the distress affects a feeling mind more, than the treat-
ment to which the women are exposed. But the enormi-
ties frequently committed in an African ship, though
equally flagrant, are little known here; and are con-
sidered, there, only as matters of course. When the
women and girls are taken on board a ship, naked,
trembling, terrified, perhaps almost exhausted with cold,
fatigue, and hunger, they are often exposed to the
wanton rudeness of white savages. The poor creatures
cannot understand the language they hear, but the
looks and manner of the speakers are sufficiently
intelligible. In imagination the pray is divided; upon
the spot, and only reserved till opportunity offers.
Where resistance, or refusal, would be utterly in vain;
even the solicitation of consent is seldom thought of.
But I forbear. This is not a subject for decoration.
Facts like these, so certain and so numerous, speak

for themselves. Surely, if the advocates for the Slave Trade attempt to plead for it, before the wives and daughters of our happy land, or before those who have never a daughter of their own, they must lose their cause, and still more so before the friends of justice and humanity. Perhaps some hard-hearted pleader may suggest, that such treatment would indeed be cruel in Europe; but the African women are negroes, savages, who have no idea of other nicer sensations, which obtain among civilized people. I dare contradict them in the strongest terms. I have lived long, and conversed much, amongst these supposed savages; I have often slept in their towns, in a house filled with goods for trade, with no person in the house but myself, and with no other door than a mat; in that security, which no man in his senses would expect in this civilized nation, especially in this metropolis, without the precaution of having strong doors, strongly locked and bolted! And with regard to the women, in Senegal, where I was most acquainted, I have seen many instances of modesty, and even delicacy, which would not disgrace an English woman. Yet, such is the treatment which I have known permitted, if not encouraged, in many of our ships; they have been abandoned, without restraint, to the lawless will of the first comers. Accustomed thus to despise, insult, and injure the slaves on board, it may be expected that the conduct of many of our people to the natives, with whom they trade, is, as far as circumstances admit, very similar; and this is so. They are considered as a people to be robbed and spoiled with impunity. Every art is employed to deceive and wrong them. And he who has more success in this way, than most to boast of. Not an article that is capable of diminution or adul-

teration, is shattered glass, or snuff. The spirits are lowered by water. False heads are put into the kegs that contain the gunpowder; so that, though the keg appears large, there is no more powder in it, than in a much smaller. The linen and cotton cloths are opened, and two or three yards, according to the length of the piece, cut off, not from the end, but out of the middle, where it is not so readily noticed.

The natives are cheated, in the number, weight, measure, or quality of what they purchase, in every possible way: and by habit and emulation, a marvellous dexterity is acquired in these practices. And thus the natives, in their turn, in proportion to their commerce with the Europeans, and, (I am sorry to add,) particularly with the English, become jealous, insidious, and revengeful.

They know with whom they deal, and are accordingly prepared; though they can trust some ships and agents, which have treated them with punctuality, and may be trusted by them. A quarrel, sometimes, furnishes pretext for detaining, and carrying away one or more of the natives, which is retaliated, if practicable, upon the next boat that comes to the place, from the same port. For so far their vindictive temper is restrained by their ideas of justice, that they will not, often, revenge an injury received from a Liverpool ship, upon one belonging to Bristol or London.

They will, usually, wait with patience the arrival of one, which, they suppose, by her sailing from the same place, has some connexion with that which used them ill: and they are so quick at distinguishing such little local differences of language and customs in a ship, that before they have been in a ship five minutes, and often before they come on board, they know with cer-

tainly, whether she be from Bristol, Liverpool, or London.

Retaliation on their parts, furnishes a plea for reprisal on ours. Thus, in one place or another, trade is often suspended, all intercourse cut off, and things are in a state of war; till necessity, either on the ship's part or on theirs, produces overtures of peace, and dictates the price, which the offending party must pay for it. But it is a warlike peace. We trade under arms; and they are furnished with long knives.

For, with a few exceptions, the English and the Africans, reciprocally, consider each other as consummate villains, who are always watching opportunities to do mischief. In short, we have, I fear, too deservedly a very unfavourable character upon the coast. When I have charged a black with unfairness and dishonesty, he has answered, if able to clear himself, with an air of disdain, "What! do you think I am a white man?"

Such is the nature, such are the concomitants, of the slave trade; and such is the school in which many thousands of our seamen are brought up. Can we, then, wonder at that impatience of subordination, and that disposition to mutiny amongst them, which has been of late so loudly complained of, and so severely felt? Will not sound policy suggest the necessity of some expedient here? Or can sound policy suggest any effectual, expedient, but the total suppression of a trade which, like a poisonous root, diffuses its malignity into every branch?

The effects which our trade has upon the blacks, those especially who come under our power, may be considered under three heads.—How they are acquired? The mortality they are subject to? and, How those who survive are disposed of?

I confine my remarks on the first head to the Windward coast, and can speak most confidently of the trade in Sherbro, where I lived. I own, however, that I question, if any part of the Windward coast is equal to Sherbro, in point of regularity and government. They have no men of great power or property among them; as I am told there are upon the Gold Coast, at White and Senin. The Sherbro people live much in the patriarchal way. An old man usually presides in each town, whose authority depends more on his years, than on his possessions; and he, who is called the king, is not easily distinguished, either by state or wealth, from the rest. But the different districts, which seem to be, in many respects, independent of each other, are incorporated, and united, by means of an institution which pervades them all, and is called the Puroo. The persons of this order, who are very numerous, seem very much to resemble the Druids, who once presided in our island.

The Puroo has both the legislative and executive authority, and, under their sanction, there is a police exercised, which is by no means contemptible. Every thing belonging to the Puroo is mysterious and severe, but, upon the whole, it has very good effects; and as any man, whether bond or free, who will submit to be initiated into their mysteries, may be admitted of the order, it is a kind of commonwealth. And, perhaps, few people enjoy more simple, political freedom, than the inhabitants of Sherbro, belonging to the Puroo, (who are not slaves,) further than they are bound by their own institutions. Private property is tolerably well secured, and violence is much suppressed.

The state of Slavery among these wild barbarous people, as we esteem them, is much milder than in our

colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our West India plantations, and therefore no call for that excessive, unintermitted labour, which exhausts our slaves; so, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood even from a slave. If he does, he is liable to a strict inquisition; for the Purrow laws will not allow a private individual to shed blood. A man may sell his slave, if he pleases; but he may not wantonly abuse him. The laws, likewise, punish some species of theft with slavery, and in cases of adultery, which are very common, as polygamy is the custom of the country, both the woman, and the man who offends with her, are liable to be sold for slaves, unless they can satisfy the husband, or unless they are redeemed by their friends.

Among these unenlightened blacks, it is a general maxim, that if a man steals, or breaks a moveable, as a musket, for instance, the offence may be nearly compensated, by putting an other musket in its place; but offences, which cannot be repaired in kind, as adultery, admit of no satisfaction, till the injured person declares that he is satisfied. So that, if a rich man seduces the wife of a poor man, he has it in his power to change places with him; for he may send for every article in his house, one by one, till he says, "I have enough." The only alternative, is personal slavery.

I suppose, bribery and influence may have their effects in Guinea, as they have in some other countries; but their laws, in the main, are wise and good; and, upon the whole, they have considerable operation; and therefore, I believe, many of the slaves purchased in Sherbro, and probably upon the whole Windward Coast, are convicts, who have forfeited their liberty, by breaking the laws of their country.

But I apprehend, that the neighbourhood of our ships, and the desire of our goods, are motives which often push the rigour of the laws to an extreme, which would not be exacted, if they were left to themselves.

But slaves are the staple article of the traffic; and though a considerable number may have been born near the sea, I believe the bulk of them are brought from far. I have reason to think, that some travel more than a thousand miles, before they reach the sea-coast. Whether there may be convicts amongst these likewise, or what proportion they may bear to those who are taken prisoners in war, it is impossible to know.

I judge, the principal source of the slave trade is the wars which prevail among the natives. Sometimes these wars break out between those who live near the sea. The English, and other Europeans, have been charged with fomenting them; I believe, (so far as concerns the Windward coast,) unjustly. That some would do it, if they could, I doubt not; but I do not think they can have opportunity. Nor is it needful they should interfere. Thousands, in our own country, wish for war, because they fatten upon its spoils.

Human nature is much the same in every place, and few people will be willing to allow, that the negroes in Africa are better than themselves. Supposing, therefore, they wish for European goods, may not they wish to purchase them from a ship just arrived? Of course, they must wish for slaves to go to market with; and if they have not slaves, and think themselves strong enough to invade their neighbours, they will probably wish for war. And if once they wish for it, how easy it is to find, or to make, pretexis for breaking an inconvenient peace; or, (after the example of greater herces, of

Christian names,) to make depredations, without condescending to assign any reasons.

I verily believe, that the far greater part of the wars in Africa would cease, if the Europeans would cease to tempt them, by offering goods for slaves. And though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe, the captives reserved for sale, are fewer than the slain.

I have not sufficient data to warrant calculation, but I suppose, not less than one hundred thousand slaves are exported, annually, from all parts of Africa, and that more than one half of these are exported in English bottoms.

If but an equal number are killed in war, and if many of these wars are kindled by the incentive of selling their prisoners; what an annual accumulation of blood must there be, crying against the nations of Europe concerned in this trade, and particularly against our own!

I have often been gravely told, as a proof that the Africans, however hardly treated, deserved but little compassion, that they are a people so destitute of natural affection, that it is common among them for parents to sell their children, and children their parents. And, I think, a charge of this kind is brought against them by the respectable author of *Spectacle de la Nature*. But he must have been misinformed. I never heard of one instance of either, while I used the Coast.

One article more upon this head, is kidnapping, or stealing free people. Some people suppose, that the ship trade is rather the stealing than the buying of slaves. But there is enough to lay to the charge of the ships, without accusing them falsely. The slaves, in general, are bought and paid for. Sometimes, when

goods are lost, or injured on shore, the trader voluntarily leaves a free person, perhaps his own son, as a hostage, or pawn, for the payment; and in case of default, the hostage is carried off, and sold; which, however hard upon him, being in consequence of a free regulation, cannot be deemed unfair. There have been instances of unprincipled captains, who, at the close of what they supposed their last voyage, and when they had no intention of revisiting the coast, even detained and carried away free people with them; and left the next ship, that should come from the same port, to risk the consequences. But these actions, I hope and believe, are not common.

With regard to the natives, to steal a free man or woman, and to sell them on board a ship, would, I think, be a more difficult and more dangerous attempt in Shesbro, than in London. But I have no doubt, that the traders, who come from the interior parts of Africa, at a great distance, find opportunity, in the course of their journey, to pick up stragglers, whom they may meet in their way. This branch of oppression and robbery would likewise fail, if the temptation to it were removed.

I have, to the best of my knowledge, pointed out the principal sources of that immense supply of slaves which furnishes so large an exportation every year. If all that are taken on board the ships were to survive the voyage, and be landed in good order, possibly the English, French, and Dutch islands and colonies, would be soon overstocked, and fewer ships would sail to the coast. But a large abatement must be made for mortality. After what I have already said of their treatment, I shall now, that I am again to consider them on board the ships, confine myself to this point.

In the Portuguese ships, which trade from Brazil to the Gold coast and Angola, I believe, a heavy mortality is not frequent. The slaves have room; they are not put in irons, (I speak from information only,) and are humanely treated.

With our ships, the great object is, to be full. When the ship is there, it is thought desirable she should take as many as possible. The cargo of a vessel of a hundred tons, or little more, is calculated to purchase from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty slaves. Their lodging-rooms below the deck, which are three, (for the men, the boys, and the women,) besides a place for the sick, are sometimes more than five feet high, and sometimes less; and this height is divided towards the middle, for the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other, like books upon a shelf. I have known them so close, that the shelf would not easily contain one more. And I have known a white man sent down among the men, to lay them in these rows to the greatest advantage, so that as little space as possible might be lost.

Let it be observed, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewise in irons, for the most part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to rise or to lie down, without hurting themselves, or each other. Nor is the motion of the ship, especially her heeling, or stoop on one side, when under sail, to be omitted; for this, as they lie athwart, or cross the ship, adds to the uncomfortableness of their lodging, especially to those who lie on the leeward or leaning side of the vessel.

As to the tossing, deep the ground—

The heat and the smell of these rooms, when the weather will not admit of the slaves being brought upon deck, and of having their rooms cleaned every day, would be almost insupportable to a person not accustomed to them. If the slaves and their rooms can be constantly aired, and they are not detained too long on board, perhaps there are not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down, by the weather, to breathe a hot and corrupted air, sometimes for a week; this, added to the galling of their fronts, and the despondency which seizes their spirits when thus confined, soon becomes fatal. And every morning, perhaps, more instances than one are found, of the living and the dead, like the captives of Mesentian, fastened together.

Epidemical fevers and fluxes, which fill the ship with noisome and noxious effluvia, often break out, and infect the negroes likewise, and thus the oppressors and the oppressed, fall by the same stroke. I believe, nearly one half of the slaves on board, have, sometimes, died; and that the loss of a third part, in these circumstances, is not unusual. The ship, in which I was mate, left the coast with two hundred and eighteen slaves on board; and though we were not much affected by epidemical disorders, I find, by my journal of that voyage, (now before me,) that we buried sixty-two on our passage to South-Carolina, exclusive of those which died before we left the coast, of which I have no account.

I believe, upon an average between the more healthy, and the more sickly voyages, and including all contingencies, one fourth of the whole purchase may be allotted to the article of mortality: that is, if the English ships purchase sixty thousand slaves annually,

upon the whole extent of the coast, the annual loss of lives cannot be much less than *sixteen thousand*.

I am now to speak of the survivors.—When the ships make the land, (usually the West-India islands,) and have their port in view, after having been four, five, six weeks, or a longer time, at sea, (which depends much upon the time that passes before they can get into the permanent trade-winds, which blow from the north-east and east across the Atlantic,) then, and not before, they venture to release the men slaves from their irons: and then, the sight of the land, and their freedom from long and painful confinement, usually excite in them a degree of slacrity, and a transient feeling of joy—

The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.

But this joy is short-lived indeed. The condition of

the unhappy slaves is in a continual progress from bad to worse.—Their case is truly pitiable, from the mo-

ment they are in a state of slavery in their own country; but it may be deemed a state of ease and liberty, compared with their situation on board our ships.

Yet, perhaps, they would wish to spend the remainder of their days on ship-board, could they know, beforehand, the nature of the servitude which awaits them on shore; and that the dreadful hardships and sufferings they have already endured, would, to the most of them, only terminate in excessive toil, hunger, and the excruciating tortures of the cart-whip, inflicted at the caprice of an unfeeling overseen, proud of the power allowed him of punishing whom, and when, and how he pleases.

I hope the slaves, in our islands, are better treated

now, than they were at the time when I was in the trade. And, even then, I know there were slaves, who, under the care and protection of humane masters, were considerably happy. But I saw and heard enough to satisfy me, that their condition, in general, was wretched to the extreme. However, my stay in Antigua and St. Christopher's, (the only islands I visited,) was too short, to qualify me for saying much, from my own certain knowledge, upon this painful subject. Nor is it needful:—enough has been offered by several respectable writers, who have had opportunity of collecting surer and fuller information.

One thing I cannot omit, which was told me by the gentleman to whom my ship was consigned, at Antigua, in the year 1751, and who was himself a planter. He said, that calculations had been made, with all possible exactness, to determine which was the preferable, that is, the more saving method of managing slaves:

Whether to appoint them moderate work, plenty of provision, and such treatment as might enable them to protract their lives to old age? Or, By rigorously straining their strength to the utmost, with little relaxation, hard fare, and hard usage, to wear them out before they became useless, and unable to do service; and then, to buy new ones, to fill up their places?

He further said, that these skilful calculators had determined in favour of the latter mode, as much the cheaper; and that he could mention several estates, in the island of Antigua, on which it was seldom known that a slave had lived above nine years. *Es pede Herculem!*

When the slaves are landed for sale, (for in the Leeward Islands they are usually sold on shore,) it may happen, that after a long separation in different parts of the ship, when they are brought together in one place, some who are nearly related may recognize each other. If upon such a meeting, pleasure should be felt, it can be but momentary. The sale disperses them wide, to different parts of the island, or to different islands. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must suddenly part again, probably to meet no more.

After a careful perusal of what I have written, weighing every paragraph distinctly, I can find nothing to retract. As it is not easy to write altogether with coolness upon this business, and especially not easy to me, who have formerly been so deeply engaged in it; I have been jealous, lest the warmth of imagination might have insensibly seduced me, to aggravate and overcharge some of the horrid features, which I have attempted to delineate, of the African trade. But, upon a strict review, I am satisfied.

I have apprized the reader, that I write from memory, after an interval of more than thirty years. But at the same time, I believe, many things which I saw, heard, and felt, upon the coast of Africa, are so deeply engraven in my memory, that I can hardly forget, or greatly mistake them, while I am capable of remembering any thing. I am certainly not guilty of wilful misrepresentation. And, upon the whole, I dare appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, in whose presence I write, and before whom I, and my readers, must all shortly appear, that, (with the restrictions and exceptions I have made,) I have advanced nothing, but

what, to the best of my judgment and conscience, is true.

I have likewise written without solicitation, and simply from the motive I have already assigned; a conviction, that the share I have formerly had in the trade, binds me, in conscience, to throw what light I am able upon the subject, now it is likely to become a point of parliamentary investigation.

No one can have less interest in it than I have at present, further than as I am interested by the feelings of humanity, and a regard for the honour and welfare of my country.

Though unwilling to give offence to a single person, in such a cause, I ought not to be afraid of offending many, by declaring the truth. If, indeed, there can be many, whom even interest can prevail upon to contradict the common sense of mankind, by pleading for a commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive as the African Slave Trade!